

# REBECCA COHN eNEWSLETTER

for the twenty-fourth Assembly District

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## Cohn's Comment



Everyday consumers enter into financial transactions that require giving out personal information. With the rise of identity theft, being careful with your information has become vitally important. Personal data such as account numbers, social security and taxpayer identification, driver's license numbers, addresses and phone numbers should be given out with caution. Discretion during purchases and care with records are keys to helping preventing financial fraud and identity theft.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) states that 42% of fraud reports were ID theft in 2001. Hugh Stevenson, the FTC's associate director for planning and information, states that a good portion of ID thefts are tied to the Internet.

The internet allows thieves easy access to personal information through a variety of unethical means. Web site hacking, password "phishing" and phony credit card offers are just a few of the ways that thieves can get your information.

While banks and credit card companies often bear the brunt of the financial loss from information theft, individuals have to undergo the trauma of restoring their identity, credit and good name. Victims spend countless hours convincing banks, creditors and government agencies that transactions are fraudulent. It can take years to clean up a record of the damage

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## Cohn Holds Holocaust Memorial

SACRAMENTO – Assembly Member Rebecca Cohn presided over an Assembly Floor Ceremony honoring Holocaust survivors from across California on Monday, April 24. Cohn organized the event which brought over 80 survivors onto the Assembly Floor, making it the largest

official recognition of survivors by the State. Holocaust survivor Chayale Ash-Fuhrman gave a keynote address detailing her experiences and the unique role women played during in helping others survive the camps and ghettos.

Cohn is the principal author of ACR 100 declaring April 24 to April 30, 2006 "California Holocaust Remembrance

## Bills Progress Through Key Committees

SACRAMENTO – Assembly Member Rebecca Cohn's legislative package continued to make progress in April with several bills passing through key committees. These include bills aimed at standardizing public safety communications to help first responders during

Week". To coincide with the event, Cohn commissioned an essay project where students interviewed Holocaust survivors

and wrote about the survivors' experiences. Eighty-one essays were compiled into a book which was distributed at the ceremony. Fifteen other Assembly Members' offices participated in the project.

This year's booklet and the previous years' versions are available on Assembly Member Cohn's website at [democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a24/](http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a24/).

Contact Gabe Gopen for more information at (408) 282-8920 or [Gabe.Gopen@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Gabe.Gopen@asm.ca.gov) ♦



Holocaust survivor Chayale Ash-Fuhrman gives the keynote address during the Assembly Floor Ceremony as Assemblywoman Cohn looks on.

Photo by Russell Stiger

emergencies (AB 2116), toughening the penalty for school employees preying on students (AB 2058) and funding programs in the LGBT community (AB 2051).

**AB 2058:** Increases the penalty for school employees (teachers,

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done by an identity thief. You may also be unable to cash checks, obtain loans, rent an apartment or get utilities.

California law includes many protections for consumers including prohibiting their information from being sold to third parties. There are penalties for possessing or using devices that rewrite magnetic strips for credit cards. Consumers have the right to have their names removed from any list provided by a credit bureau to another entity for credit offers he or she did not solicit.

According to the Department of Justice, the word "SCAM" can help you remember the steps needed to prevent your identity from being stolen:

**Stingy** – Keep your personal information, like your mother's maiden name or Social Security Number, on a need-to-know basis and never give it out over the phone. If a telemarketer calls to inform you that you have been pre-approved for a new credit card, ask for a written application.

**Check** financial statements often. Be aware of discrepancies in bank and credit card statements. If you sign up for monthly statements and do not receive them, verify with the company whether there are any other addresses to which these statements are being sent.

**Ask** periodically for your credit report and verify whether all information on it is correct. To obtain a copy of your credit report, you can call Equifax (888-685-1111; \$8), Experian (888-397-3742; \$8) or TransUnion (800-888-4213; \$8).

**Maintain** complete records of all your financial transactions. The proof that you keep can prove to credit card companies or your bank that identity theft has occurred and that you are not responsible. ♦

- Rebecca Cohn

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## Cohn Celebrates Earth Day with Creek Cleanup

SAN JOSE – Assembly Member Cohn, along with local high school and college students, organized a cleanup of Silicon Valley's Guadalupe River on Saturday, April 22 in celebration of Earth Day 2006. Volunteers gathered along a half mile stretch adopted by Assembly Member Cohn and removed over 400 lbs of trash from the river bed that included shopping carts, discarded furniture, mattresses, computer

monitors and other trash potentially toxic to the health of the only urban river in the South Bay.

Many areas of the Guadalupe River are easily accessible to pedestrian and automobile traffic. This leads to litter and dumping of unwanted items. Not only are chemicals from this litter toxic to the health of our river, but large items can block the flow of water

and can cause flooding.

It is important that our environment is protected not just through policy in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., but by our own actions in our community. Keeping our creeks and rivers clear of



Volunteers pose alongside their haul.

obstacles and debris is an important step in maintaining our healthy environment. It is essential that we continue to work towards a better environment not just on Earth Day, but everyday.

All equipment was supplied by the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Refreshments were provided by Longs Drugs and Noah's Bagels and all volunteers received a Certificate of Recognition from the California State Assembly.

For information on how you can help keep your community clean, contact Mark Vanni at (408) 282-8920 or at [Mark.Vanni@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Mark.Vanni@asm.ca.gov). ♦

## Support Troops During Military Appreciation Month

SAN JOSE – Did you know that some of the most courageous people alive today live here in the Silicon Valley? Active servicemen, servicewomen and veterans all fought for our country to defend our freedom. So often, Americans do not take the time to acknowledge the contributions of those who have fought in conflicts that have helped preserved our way of life. As a result, May has been delegated National Military Appreciation Month by Congress.

Here are some things you can do to show your appreciation to our veterans and other members of the military:

Visit Operation Dear Abby ([www.operationdearabby.net](http://www.operationdearabby.net)) to write notes of appreciation to active service people. You can also select what branch you would like to write to.

Donate airline miles to wounded service personnel who want to go home and to the families of injured

soldiers who want to visit them at military hospitals across the nation. To learn about the Hero Miles program from the Fisher House, which helps military families, visit [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org).

Give phones cards to soldiers and their families so they can stay in touch. Go to Operation Uplink ([www.operationuplink.org](http://www.operationuplink.org)) to find out how.

Visit a veteran by finding out where the closest VA hospital is ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and click on "Find a Facility"). Make sure and call the hospital to facilitate the visits with local veterans.

Click on the website America Supports You ([www.americasupportsyoudmil](http://www.americasupportsyoudmil)) to find out the many other ways you can help brighten the day for service people, veterans and their families. ♦

*Remember that Memorial Day is celebrate on Monday, May 29.*

# Mental Health Month Educates Public and Raises Awareness

SAN JOSE – Every May since 1949, mental health organizations and professionals have united to promote mental wellness and overall health in our community. This 50 year old tradition helps improve the lives of

millions of Americans, perhaps even someone close to you struggling with mental illness.

The theme for this year's observance is MIND Your Health, which focuses on the mind-body

connection. Recent research shows that being healthy does not relate just to our physical health—our mental and physical well-being go hand-in-hand. Caring for your mind as well as your body will keep you healthier,

happier and more productive.

It is essential to realize that most mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety disorders, are as treatable as physical illnesses. The Mental Health Month Campaign seeks to help balance everyday stresses, increase awareness of mental health issues, and improve overall health in the community.

If you wish to become involved in this crusade for better mental health, you can find additional information at the National Mental Health Association's website ([www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)). If you or anyone you know is struggling with mental illness, contact information for organizations such as 24-hour crisis centers, like the National Hopeline Network (800-SUICIDE), community mental health services, individual mental health providers, and a wealth of other organizations can be located at [www.nmha.org/infoctr/FAQs/treatments.cfm](http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/FAQs/treatments.cfm). ♦

## Celebrate Asian American Heritage Month in May

SAN JOSE – May is Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month. During the month of May we recognize, appreciate, and celebrate the vibrant and diverse culture of Asian Americans. In California, APAs are considered among the fastest growing racial and ethnic groups and currently make up more than 14% of the state-wide population.

In celebration of APA Heritage Month, two local community service organizations are holding fundraisers to help to continue to provide the necessary social services for Santa Clara County.

Asian Americans for Community Involvement's (AACI) 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Banquet and Community Star Awards is on Friday, May 19 at the Fairmont San Jose. AACI was founded in 1973 and is the largest nonprofit advocacy, educational, health, and human services organization committed to the

welfare of Asian Pacific Americans in Santa Clara County. For more information, contact Kathleen Cordova, Development Director, at (408) 975-2730 ext. 102 or [Kathleen.Cordova@aaci.org](mailto:Kathleen.Cordova@aaci.org).

Yu-Ai Kai will be hosting an event called Sake San Jose on the evening of Thursday, May 25 in Japantown. Participating merchants will have special tables in their locations, each with a different type of sake to sample. Yu-Ai Kai is a Japanese American Community Senior Service organization committed to serving seniors with an array of activities and programs. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit [www.sakesanjos.com](http://www.sakesanjos.com).

During the month of May, we honor the achievements, celebrate the rich history, and recognize the many contributions APAs have made to our society. ♦

## Legislative Update: Bills Clear Committees in Senate, Assembly

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coaches, counselors, etc.) engaging in intercourse with a student between the ages of 14-17 to a wobbler (can be either misdemeanor or felony). Passed the Assembly Committee on Public Safety 5-0. Location: Assembly Appropriations.

**AB 2051:** Under existing law, persons applying for marriage licenses are required to pay a \$23 fee to fund various programs designed to prevent and mitigate acts of domestic violence. AB 2051 would levy a similar fee on individuals registering as domestic partners. The funds generated would support many initiatives, including grants to shelters serving victims of

LGBT domestic violence and LGBT issue sensitivity training for law enforcement and domestic violence service providers. Passed Assembly Judiciary 6-2 and Assembly Public Safety 4-2. Location: Assembly Appropriations.

**AB 2116:** Interoperability – Specifies that the communications equipment recommended by the Public Safety Radio Strategic Planning Committee for purchase by any state public safety entities meet specific criteria for interoperability. Passed Assembly Appropriations 15-2. Location: Assembly Floor.

**AB 117:** Repeals the 55% limit in the County of Santa Clara on Tax Equity

Allocation funding for the county's four no/low property tax cities. Passed the Senate Committee on Local Government 5-0. Location: Senate Appropriations.

**AB 2075:** Amends/adds a subsection that would define domestic violence and child abuse as constituting the same class of crime, allowing for the consolidation of all crimes of "domestic violence." Passed on the Assembly Floor 72-0 on April 6. Location: Senate Rules Committee.

For information on these or any other of Assembly Member Cohn's bills, contact Richard Woonacott for more information at (916) 319-2024 or [Richard.Woonacott@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Richard.Woonacott@asm.ca.gov). ♦